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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides some practical suggestions for teachers about promoting student self-concept development in schools. An examination of the role of perception in behavior is followed by a discussion of ways that teachers can assist the development of students' self-concepts. A review of perception, consistency, and perceptual organization is presented along with an exploration of the role of changes in the self-concept. Strategies for promoting change are examined, openness to experience is described, the teachers' roles are discussed, and the qualities of a helping relationship are enumerated. The value of communicating is also considered. Idealized teaching roles are presented and both facilitating and controlling roles of teachers toward their students are illustrated. Differences between the roles are discussed and examples of appropriate teacher behaviors are given. The controlling mode of teacher behavior is presented as one in which there is little teacher concern for student self-concept, while self-concept is seen as a control factor in the facilitating mode of teacher behavior. (NRB)

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SELF-CONCEPT AND SCHOOLING

ROBERT E. BILLS

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SELF-CONCEPT AND SCHOOLING

This booklet purposes to share some practical suggestions about self-concept development in schools. It deals with two questions. First, why should school people be concerned with self-concept development? Second, within the limits of school experiences, what are some of the things that can be done to aid self-concept development?

The answer to the first of these two questions assumes that influencing self-concept development is central to helping schools achieve their goals. This does not mean that our job as school people is primarily self-concept development. However, if we want to realize the goals to which schools aspire, we must provide students with experiences and relationships in which constructive self-concept development can occur.

Why Should We Be Concerned with Self-Concept?

Suppose we try to answer the two questions posed above by looking at the role of perception in behavior and then at what can be done through school experience to assist constructively in the development of students' self-concepts.

I deeply appreciate the many helpful suggestions given me by Ralph M. Roberts, emeritus professor of counseling and guidance at The University of Alabama, who read this booklet.

BELIEF AND BEHAVIOR

What each of us does is consistent with what we believe the world is like. Although other people may find our behavior difficult to understand, it makes sense to us and it would make sense to them if they could see things as we do. We learn to perceive reality, and it becomes whatever we think it is.

Because each of us lives in a world of our own creation, no two persons react in the same way to identical situations. This sometimes leads other people to see us as odd or peculiar for doing some of the things we do since they do not see the world as we do. Let me illustrate this phenomenon.

Thomas A. Edison believed that if he undressed to sleep he would have insomnia, so he slept with his clothes on. Since he believed this to be true, he probably would have had insomnia if he had undressed for bed, which would have further reinforced his belief that undressing caused insomnia.

If I believe that Darwin's theory of the evolution of the species is a valid description of how man came into being, and if I teach biology, then I will probably teach such a theory as fact. But if I believe that humankind had a creation separate and apart from the other animals, then I will probably teach a creationist theory. If I believe a creationist theory, I will probably not even teach biology, since my beliefs would cause me to reject one of its "theoretical" underpinnings.

And if I believe that students learn best through an interaction process, I may seat myself with them where they can see me and I can see them and where I am on the same physical level as they are. If I ask questions, it will be to see what they are thinking, to get them to share their points of view, to involve them in their own learning, or to open new avenues of thought. But if I believe that it is my job to "teach" or instruct the students, then I may stand in front of them and do most of the talking. If I ask questions, it will be to see if they understand what has been "taught," to see if they have prepared themselves, or to see if they remember what I told them.

CONSISTENCY OF PERCEPTION

All we ever have as the basis for our behavior are our beliefs about what the world is like and what is important. The probability that much of what we believe to be true today will be shown tomorrow to be false makes no difference in how we behave. We will continue to behave on the basis of what we believe is true until we come to believe that it is not true.

Changes in our beliefs come slowly. What we will believe tomorrow is very likely to be what we believed yesterday. There is a principle involved here which says that what we already believe makes it difficult for us to accept newer beliefs that appear to be contradictory to the ones we already hold. This is the principle of consistency of perception. It means that the way we see things today very likely will be the way we will see them tomorrow. When people who understand the principle want us to change our minds about something, they often try to help us see that a new idea is not really new at all or that it really is not inconsistent with what we already believe.

Chaos would confront us if we had to rediscover the world each

day. We could never grow. Most of our time would be spent learning how to perceive the world and trying to organize our perceptions into meaningful patterns. Instead of building a new world each day, however, we assume that the world continues to be as we believe it to be. Thus, we tend to reject or distort new experiences which might cause us to change our ways of seeing our world.

"This above all: to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any Man." [*Hamlet* I, iii]

Unless a new perception is consistent with our older perceptions, we are apt to reject it. A perception which is inconsistent with other perceptions that we hold tends to force us to reorganize our way of seeing things. Since the older way at least enables us to survive and may even be satisfying, the simplest thing to do is to reject the newer, inconsistent perception. If we can do this, then we do not have to change. Life seems much simpler. Anyway, we cannot believe two opposed "truths" if we see them as contradictory.

So why should we want to change? Change is risky. It involves uncertainty. It involves giving up a tenable position, accepting some degree of ambiguity, and moving into the unknown. Unless we feel certain of what is going to happen to us and secure in where we are going, we do not want to change. The consequences are too unpredictable and potentially painful.

CONSISTENCY AND PERSONALITY

Consistency of perception may seem highly undesirable when looked at through the eyes of a person who is trying to get another person to change. It has its good points, though. Consistency gives each of us the framework for the individual personalities we possess. Individual uniqueness stems from the fact that we perceive in unique ways, and our behavior is consistent with our ways of perceiving. Consistency in our behavior is also due to the fact that we change slowly. Our personalities tomorrow will resemble our personalities today. Personality is the sum total of the unique patterns of our behavior and the consistency of these patterns.

Most of us have observed consistency in the behavior of other people. For example, each of us has some reasonable idea of how our friends will behave under a given set of circumstances. In fact, we often predict how a particular person will behave given a particular set of circumstances. When one does not act as predicted, we are surprised: "I never would have thought she would have done that" or "That's a strange way for her to react; it doesn't seem like her."

At one time or another most people have tried to get other people to do what they want them to do by arranging a situation so that it will be perceived in a particular manner. Advertising agents, sales people, politicians, preachers, and others often practice this technique. We have all watched children try to manipulate their parents this way.

PERCEPTUAL ORGANIZATION

There are times when the individual has a completely unorganized perceptual field. This represents an extreme of perception. The field of the newborn infant is like this, for example. The child has had little opportunity to differentiate his or her perceptual field and

has only a few loosely organized perceptions. With more experiences, the infant slowly differentiates specific aspects of his or her world of reality and begins to organize these into meaningful patterns. The slowness of this differentiation may be illustrated by an infant's difficulty in recognizing a particular man as "daddy." At first, all men are "daddy." Finally, a particular man is seen as "daddy." In the very same way, a fine fur may be "kitty" to a very young child.

Another extreme of perceptual organization is a completely inflexible perceptual field: beliefs and patterns of organization change very little over time, if at all. Such a state is characteristic of some people classified as mentally ill. Whereas the perceptual field of the healthy individual is flexible, changeable, and extensive, that of the less healthy person is constricted, inhibited, and narrow.

When the perceptual field of an individual is constricted, limited, and narrow, new experiences are rejected and the person fails to change. Such a person "learns" slowly, if at all. To the degree that students have flexible perceptual fields, they are amenable to change. But those with less flexibility are less likely to change. Assisting students to be flexible is an important aspect of helping them to learn.

CHANGE AND SELF-CONCEPT

What does flexibility and the capacity for change have to do with self-concept? A great deal. The most cherished perceptions we hold are those which pertain to what we are like and what we aspire to be. These special perceptions constitute our self-concepts and are central to all of our beliefs; so central that it can be said that only that which is consistent with our self-concepts can be accepted by us and integrated into our perceptual fields. In other words, our self-concepts serve as screens through which all perceptions are filtered.

Another principle needs to be introduced at this point. The importance of any new percept determines to a large degree whether or not we will be able to accept it and integrate it into our perceptual fields. Unless we feel that the new percept is important, our behavior remains unchanged and the "learning" is insignificant. We usually ignore perceptions we regard as unimportant; we may even be unaware of their presence.

In school, however, students may not be free to ignore unimportant perceptions. What do they do? Their tendency is to ignore them, but the teacher reminds them of the consequences of such actions. If their overall perceptual pattern tells them it is important to avoid the consequences, they may temporarily accept the new perceptions but forget them as rapidly as they can once the teacher's threat is removed. How much "unlearning" occurs as students leave their classrooms after final examinations?

A carrot on a stick may be a good way to get a mule to move, but it's a poor way to help children learn something of significance.

If we are changed only by those things which are important to us, the question then becomes: "What determines the importance or unimportance of a perception?" The answer is: "The self-concept." That which is consistent with our perceptions of ourselves is readily accepted and assimilated into our perceptual fields. If what is being learned is inconsistent, it will be rejected. Anything which strengthens our perceptions of self is important to us and is readily learned, provided we have the necessary background for the learning.

Generally speaking, the importance of anything is judged by its importance to the organism. As we all know, you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. It will drink if it needs water. The importance or unimportance of the water to the horse at the time will determine its behavior.

Of all aspects of ourselves, the most important to each of us is our self-concept. Self-concepts are usually even more important to us than our physical selves in determining our behavior. We will do or not do something according to its importance to our self-concepts. Often we will do things in spite of their harmful consequences for our physical selves if they help us to become the people we want to be. Some teenage girls, for example, have actually starved themselves because they fear they will gain too much weight. To preserve "face" or self, some Japanese commit hari-kari. Many young people begin to smoke or drink or use drugs because such behavior is perceived as enhancing their self-concepts in spite of the known adverse physical effects.

Changes in the self-concept. . .are changes in perception and attitude and understanding, not changes in knowledge or experience or skills.

PROMOTING CHANGE

We expect a thirsty horse to drink if water is available. We also expect people to breathe and to eat because they need air and food. Similarly, we expect sick people to get well, if they have the physical resources with which to do it. When people become ill, they usually recover and are less susceptible to reinfection by the same disease. Influenza gives a person at least a temporary immunity, for example, and other diseases such as typhoid, smallpox, or chickenpox usually give permanent immunity.

A basic principle of human existence is the ability of the organism to maintain or to enhance itself intellectually, emotionally, and physically. Whenever the status of the organism is disturbed, it moves to regain its balance and repair damage, and, whenever possible, to enhance its status so that the imbalance will not recur. Eating, breathing, drinking water, and overcoming disease represent the ability to maintain the physical self, and the development of antibodies represents the ability to enhance the physical self. We eat to maintain ourselves. We may also eat to enhance ourselves, as when a child eats "to grow big and strong" or when an adult makes a social function out of eating.

The principle of maintenance and enhancement of the self can be stated in a somewhat different way for schools and learning. People seek to grow and to learn, that is, to become more experienced and to find personal meaning in their experience. When they cannot do this in school, they seek to maintain or to defend themselves, sometimes in ways that are unacceptable to the people in the schools. Given opportunities to engage in learning which they perceive to be meaningful, students seek to gain new experience and to discover themselves in that experience. The principle which was stated earlier is relevant here—the organism determines what is meaningful to it and, in particular, the self-concept makes the determination. In school experiences, as in others, the self-concept is the most important judge of meaningfulness.

Students want to learn, to grow, and to become more experienced. This is part of living. Frequently, however, students do not

see school as meaningful or important. This does not mean that they do not want to learn. It means only that what they are being required to learn is not meaningful to them as judged by their own experience and their own self-concepts.

THREAT AND CHANGE

Teachers realize that students often cannot find personal meaning in what is being "taught." This lack of personal meaning for students occurs more frequently in middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools than in the early elementary grades, and it occurs more frequently when instruction is subject matter centered than when it is experientially centered or centered in problems which can be perceived by students as meaningful. About the only way a child can be helped to "learn" when what is being "taught" is not seen as meaningful is to try to find some way of giving the subject special meaning. We do this when we tell students that the subject matter will be important to them sometime in the future. Most children and youth are in need of immediate fulfillment, however, and cannot delay it to some future date.

Teachers usually try through various methods to give a subject some special meaning. Although teachers intend such techniques to give meaning, many of them actually appear as threats to students. Attempts to shame children, the use of ridicule and sarcasm, and various procedures such as marks, promotions, report cards, and letters to parents are often attempts to threaten children into learning. Actually many teachers behave as though they believe students will not learn the important things they need to learn unless they are somehow forced to do so. Usually the devices and behaviors teachers use to "make" children learn produce the appearance of compliance, but threats have never been very effective and today's children are not as easily threatened as children were in the past. Further, fewer means of threatening children are available today than in the past. Spanking or paddling are no longer acceptable in many schools; sending children out into the hall to become public spectacles has likewise been vetoed. Even washing children's mouths out with soap would no longer be effective, since soap does not taste as bad as it did when grandma's lye soap was used. In spite of this, many teachers keep trying to make students learn through various forms of threat and intimidation, primarily because the teachers view this approach as their last resort in helping students learn.

The strong men of history have had one psychological characteristic in common; they seem always to have been themselves as persons—Michelangelo fighting against odds for a chance to sculpt, Beethoven composing though deaf, and Milton compelled by some inner fire to write, though blind. Such men give meaning to the phrase, "fulfilling one's destiny."

However, threat usually has the opposite effect from that which is desired. Whereas the normal course of growth is to incorporate new experience into the self, under threat people seek to defend themselves and they stop growing. A threatened child is a frightened child, and a frightened child stops learning. Fear reduces capacity to function effectively. There is no such thing as scaring a child into learning to read or to solve problems.

If we try to force children to change in ways which are not consistent with their self-concepts, they resist our efforts to change. If we insist, we threaten them, and they become defensive. Defensive people do not learn. They are too busy defending themselves against change. All of their energies are mobilized to defend the self.

CHANGING SELF-CONCEPTS

It might be inferred from this discussion that schools should be responsible for making students hold certain self-concepts so they will learn what the schools think they ought to learn. No such implication is intended. If teachers had to be responsible for changing students' self-concepts, they would be faced with the question, "What do we want students' self-concepts to become?" This is unanswerable within our society, since there is no single acceptable answer to the question. Further, attempts to answer such a question would have to be preceded with answers to questions such as, "Do schools have a right to change students' self-concepts?" and "Do schools have a right to make students become what the schools believe they should be?" Some societies have had little difficulty in answering such questions. Our society professes to believe that schools do not have such rights.

Fortunately, the principle that people seek to maintain or to enhance themselves offers a way out of the dilemma. People desire to grow, to become more experienced, and to discover themselves in their experience. This is the normal direction for their development. Thus, to help people change, it is not necessary to force them to change. All that is required is that we create climates in which they no longer need to defend themselves against change, in which they know what the options and the consequences are, and in which they can make their choices deliberately instead of "backing" into them through a need to defend themselves against the choices that they believe are being foisted on them. People can be trusted to change and to discover themselves in their experience if they are free to change. We do not have to make our students change. All we have to do is to make it possible for them to change in acceptable directions.

We don't have to indoctrinate children with our values. We can help them learn such things by discovering the personal meanings of their own experience. This is what we do in psychotherapy. Such personal meanings are the best guides for our behavior; they are the "little voice" of our consciences.

It may seem idealistic to believe that students will grow in what most teachers believe are acceptable directions even if they are not forced to do so. But what are the alternatives? One alternative is to change people through threat. This will not work. It causes people to defend themselves. A second alternative is to try to change people through bribery. This is the basis for reinforcement theories. In applying reinforcement theory, we reward what we consider to be desirable behavior and ignore that which is undesirable. Gradually, students will behave as we desire, or so goes the theory.

The application of reinforcement theory, however, is not as simple as this. For instance, how does a teacher decide what a student should be like? We can all agree that students should be able to add columns of numbers and get the correct answer; be able to read and to write so they can communicate in written language; be able to spell so that what is written is understandable; and to know other basic processes of communication. No one disagrees with such goals, but by themselves they are insufficient as goals for the schools. Schools must help students decide what they should or should not believe, should or should not value, and how they should feel about important issues. Reinforcement theory offers no answers to what position the schools should adopt on these important matters.

Anyone must see himself in relation to his environment, both personal and impersonal, and must develop his image of himself partly in response to what he sees around him. So if he sees a very small world, as a child does, his concept of himself must necessarily be narrow; if he sees himself as a citizen of the world, as a world traveler might, his self-concept embraces the world.

Anyway, when we seek to control a child's behavior through the use of reinforcement, the locus of control is still within the child. It is the child who determines if something is or is not reinforcing. And what is reinforcing to one child is not necessarily reinforcing to another, nor is it necessarily reinforcing to the same child at dif-

ferent times. Bribery as an alternative seems to be a poor one to use in developing thinking and feeling people.

A third alternative is to assist children in changing, learning, and growing. We do not have to make children grow and learn. Growing and learning are basic aspects of living. Children seek to change in what to them are meaningful directions, if they are free to do so. It is our responsibility as teachers to create climates that free children to grow, to help them become aware of alternatives and their consequences, and to help them make intelligent choices. Such climates, of course, are not neutral or value free. Acceptance of this proposition itself constitutes a powerful commitment to a particular set of values.

Everything we do or say, everything we hear, feel, or otherwise perceive, is filtered to us by how we see ourselves.

We might question the wisdom of this third alternative, but much of psychotherapy is based on it. Therapists know that, within non-threatening environments, people marshal their resources and overcome their problems. In non-threatening environments, self-concepts become less rigid and more closely approximate the personal meanings of experience; that is, people become more adequate. All therapists believe that the most important element of therapy is the relationship they develop with their clients. Therapists of different orientations try to create an optimal climate by use of different techniques, just as teachers differ in the ways in which they teach. But what is common from therapy to therapy is the relationship that therapists establish. Change and growth are the direct result of this relationship climate. Much evidence exists to support these statements.

If "sick" people can become "well" given such a relationship with a therapist, then it is not too surprising to discover that students can grow and learn, develop adequate self-concepts, discover denied and distorted personal meanings, and become more experienced within similar psychological climates, provided, of course, that within such climates there are opportunities for what the learners perceive as meaningful experiences. Again, the data to support these statements are abundant. To a significant degree, the problem of teaching resolves itself into the maintenance of adequate interpersonal relationships between teachers and students while they explore meaningful experiences together.

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE

When people are free to experience and grow, they actively seek new experience and they continue to redefine themselves through this experience. Such people are said to be open to their experience.

The drive to grow is best illustrated in infants. Infants practice "walking" from an early age. Once they discover one step in the process, they practice that step over and over. At the same time they begin to reach out for the next step. One step inexorably leads to the next. Practice is a continual process. Infants learn to draw up their knees and to pull themselves forward. Creeping yields to crawling.

About the same time that infants learn to crawl, they begin to pull themselves up to a standing position. Soon they begin to move from one point to another while holding on. They then take their first true steps without holding on. But the process is not complete. Once

children learn to walk, they practice all types of "walking." They run, skip, hop, and stand on one foot. When does the process end? What motivates it?

The unending process of learning is internally motivated. And the process of learning to walk or talk, for example, is practiced over and over to proficiency, even if it is not encouraged by other people. You do not have to make a child want to eat, breathe, run, or talk. The growth forces and the child's own motivation will provide the impetus for the learning. People want to grow, to mature, to learn, and to become more experienced. The process is a part of living; in fact, it is the essence of living.

When people are threatened, however, they defend themselves. They do not seek new experiences or redefinitions of themselves. Instead, protection of current meanings becomes the controlling need.

We can tell if people are defending themselves or if they are seeking to change by looking at certain attributes of their behavior. These attributes are the same for all people: teachers, students, administrators, and parents. People who are changing and growing, that is, open people, usually are exploring new experience. When they do, they express positive, incorporating attitudes toward that experience. They examine experience for its personal meanings and for what it tells them about themselves. The experience is personal in its meanings, and these meanings are accepted by them as their own. Furthermore, open people readily accept responsibility for themselves and for their perceptions, and they seek to find solutions to their problems through further experience.

In contrast, people who are less open reject new experience. They look for answers in past experience. They express negative attitudes toward people and things. And they seek to avoid responsibility for the solutions to their own problems, often by concentrating on the small and unimportant aspects of problems. The behavioral qualities of open people are directed toward incorporating new experience, while those of less open people serve to help them reject the new experience and its meanings. The result is that open people are in a continuous process of change, less open people tend to run in the same place.

Let me illustrate these characteristics from the problems of teachers. I have developed a set of eighty-four statements, which teachers say are important to them, and I have often asked teachers to sort these statements to describe the most important problems they experience as teachers. A teacher may select as the most important of the eighty-four problems one such as, "Teaching boys and girls who have neither the desire nor the ability to learn." Such a problem statement describes the locus of responsibility for solving the problem as centered in the boys and girls and not in the self of the teacher. In this situation, the boys and girls will have to change, not the teacher, before the problem is solved. The attitude which is expressed toward the boys and girls is a negative one. The problem is cast in the present and does not press toward a solution. Furthermore, the problem may not even be a central one for the teacher. Quite likely the teacher is experiencing this problem at some level in a more personal and central manner. It could be that the problem which really concerns the teacher is one such as, "In spite of my best

The man, for example, who has been highly and aggressively competitive for many years, cannot, except with difficulty, either suddenly or gradually become insightful and cooperative; he will still tend to see himself as needing to surpass others. The individual retains his pattern of basic characteristics and, in this sense, resists change. Indeed, this is a good thing, or we still would all be going through the difficulty of finding ourselves, as we did as adolescents.

efforts, the boys and girls are not learning as I think they should."

In contrast to the teacher described above, a less threatened and more open teacher might select as the most pressing problem one such as, "Learning newer and more effective ways of teaching boys and girls in a fast changing world." This problem expresses a positive attitude toward the boys and girls. It says they are worthy of the teacher's efforts to change himself or herself. The problem looks to the future for its solution. It involves the self of the teacher, since the teacher will have to change if the problem is to be solved. And the problem is a central one.

We know that teachers who are less threatened and more open to experience are rated by their administrators as more effective teachers and they have more positive relationships with their students than teachers who are less open to experience. We know, too, that teachers in some schools are more open to experience than are teachers in other schools. This difference in openness to experience is directly related to the quality of the relationships principals maintain with their teachers. Teachers are more open to experience when their principals are more open in their relationships with them. What is more important, students in schools with more open teachers have more positive attitudes toward their schools and more positive self-concepts than students in schools with less open teachers.

School is not psychotherapy, but there is another useful principle illustrated in the therapy setting. When people enter therapy, they usually express strong negative attitudes toward themselves and toward other people. They view things as happening to them and they see themselves as acted on rather than as acting on their worlds. They are concerned with the many negative aspects of their existence, and they feel that they are controlled by that existence instead of controlling it. Frequently, they look back to the "good old days" and express a wish that things were like they used to be.

As they proceed through successful psychotherapy, there is a gradual owning of experience and responsibility for it. Problems are seen in a larger perspective, and these people gradually accept responsibility for their solutions. Attitudes toward self and toward other people become more and more positive, and there is a developing eagerness for new experience and a searching for new personal meanings in it.

The success of teachers is a function of the teaching roles they adopt, among other things. But the increased emphasis in today's schools on subject matter as an end instead of a means forces many teachers to adopt roles in which they are seen by students as incongruent. This seriously impairs their effectiveness.

Many students and some teachers and administrators show characteristics much like people in need of therapy. Furthermore, they all differ in their openness to experience. Where the climate for change in a school is negative, there is much griping and complaining and negativism expressed. Morale is low. In schools where the climates are more positive, however, the attitudes of students, teachers, and administrators are more positive. There is greater respect for other people, and morale is higher.

There is no doubt that school is a very threatening place for many people. To the degree that people feel that they are under threat, significant learning cannot occur. Schools can achieve their purposes best where relationships are such that students and teachers both want and can explore together to discover personal meanings in new experience and to discover the true personal meanings of old experience.

HELPING RELATIONSHIPS

The qualities of relationships which help people become more open to experience are easy to describe and just as easy to violate. There are four of them. If these qualities are consistently present, the relationship is characterized by a low degree of threat and will be helpful.

A relationship is helpful to the extent that the person providing it is seen by the people who are being helped as (1) holding positive attitudes toward them, (2) being unconditional in the expression of these positive attitudes, (3) being empathically understanding, and (4) being congruent. If these qualities are demonstrated for a long enough period of time, the people who are being helped move from less to greater openness to experience. That is, they move toward holding more positive attitudes, being less isolated from the personal meanings of their experience, feeling responsible for their own behavior, and actively seeking new experience and its personal meanings.

Positive Attitudes. We hold positive attitudes toward people whom we regard as important. Obviously, we must experience our students as important people if we want to help them grow toward greater openness to experience. All too often, however, we experience positive attitudes only toward some students, and we seldom experience such feelings at all times with any of them. When students behave as we think they should, we see them in more positive ways than when they are misbehaving.

"Why" questions usually require us to defend ourselves.

Unconditional Positive Regard. Sometimes we cannot experience people as important because they do not meet the conditions we require of them. Some teachers seem to believe, for example, that girls are more important than boys; that the children of community leaders are more important than other children; that students with rich parents are more important than students with less affluent parents; that sophisticated students are more important than less sophisticated ones; that capable students are more important than less capable ones; that neat and clean children are more important than dirty ones; that those who do their work on time are more important than those who are poorly prepared; that those who give less trouble are more important than those who do; and so on. The list is endless. It is a difficult matter to see all students at all times as important. If we cannot, then we cannot always behave toward them in ways which show them that we believe what they are saying or doing is important. Sometimes we try to behave as if we are experiencing them more positively than we are. Such phony behavior is usually detected.

We live in an evaluative world. Students tend to be accepted in terms of what we want them to be and not in terms of what they are. To the degree that they are like our images of good students, we find it easy to express positive attitudes toward them. But let them deviate from this ideal image, and we can be equally negative in our attitudes. What we communicate to the students is not that we like them and feel they are important, but that we will like them and believe they are important only if they are like what we think they

Teachers frequently say, "Look at it this way" when they are trying to help a child solve a problem. What they are doing is trying to alter the child's perception so that a change in behavior will result.

should be. To students who are uncertain of themselves and who may question their worth, such conditionality of regard says, "My teacher will like me and accept me as important only if I am something other than what I am." It thus becomes a problem for the student to try to appear to be something that he or she is not. Obviously, such students must deny many of the personal meanings of their experience and pretend to believe that the meanings of the teacher's experience are theirs. Growth ceases.

Teachers find it easier to be congruent with school children and to have positive attitudes toward them than to understand them empathically or to accept them unconditionally.

Empathic Understanding. The empathic teacher understands students as the students understand themselves. Optimally, such a teacher knows what the students are experiencing, senses their personal meanings, and is able to communicate these understandings to them. Being empathic is difficult, especially when we attempt to understand many students at the same time. Fortunately, it is as important to a student that a teacher attempt to see how the student feels as it is to actually know what the student is feeling. Students give us credit when we attempt to understand them, and if we give them the opportunity to do so, they will help us to understand how they see things.

Congruence. The fourth characteristic of a helping relationship is congruence. We are congruent in the eyes of other people when what we say and do seems to them to match what we are thinking and feeling. If we are congruent, we can be trusted. If we are seen as incongruent, then we cannot be trusted and we cannot establish helping relationships. If a teacher says to a child, "Yes, I know the answer to your question, but I think you would remember it better if you looked it up for yourself," and if the child senses that the teacher does not really know the answer, then the child sees the teacher as incongruent. Or, suppose the teacher makes a mistake when writing something on the chalkboard. When the students point out the mistake, the teacher says, "I just wanted to see if you were paying attention." Such a teacher will be seen as incongruent if the students believe the teacher did not make the error deliberately.

We often share the personal meanings of our experience with a hope that our students will find them meaningful. But they can only discover their own meanings within their experience, not our meanings. When they do, they learn something significant.

When we believe and feel one way and act as if we believe and feel in another, other people receive conflicting messages from us. They find it difficult to trust us. We seem to be saying "Come closer" and "Stay away" at the same time. They become anxious in the relationship. Children frequently have difficulty experiencing their parents as congruent when they are told, "This is going to hurt me more than it will hurt you." At some later date a child may understand that the statement was true, but what matters is not what happens at a later date. Relationships are defined in terms of how we experience other people now.

If teachers are experienced consistently and over a long enough period of time as positive and unconditional in their regard for the worth of the children, if teachers are experienced as empathic and congruent, then students lower their defenses and move toward becoming their experience, toward discovering themselves in that experience, toward seeking new experience, and toward more adequate definitions of themselves. Within such a climate, children can become what their experience has taught them they are without the need to deny or to

distort experience or its meanings. They can grow and learn.

We began this booklet with the question: "Why should school people be concerned with the self-concept development of students?" We then looked at the question: "Within the limits of school experience, what can be done to influence self-concepts constructively?" We now have partial answers to these questions. If we want students to undergo significant learning—that is, learning which causes changes in behavior—we must be concerned with their self-concepts. Furthermore, the positive changes in self-concept that are basic to significant learning occur only in a climate of relationships which has four qualities. We now need to look at how these relationship qualities are communicated by teachers to their students. Students are influenced by the relationship qualities only if such qualities are communicated to them.

GETTING TO KNOW OTHERS

When we meet a new person, we begin to explore the nature of a possible relationship. In the short run, all we can base our judgments on are outward appearances. We may judge the person by manner of dress, grooming, tone of voice, "looks," and other superficial characteristics. While we are doing this we tend to generalize from other people whom we know who are similar in dress, grooming, age, and so forth, and we endow the new person with the attributes that we believe these other people have. In so doing, we make all kinds of mistakes about what the other person is like because this person is unique and cannot be like all of the other people we know who are tall or short, heavy or light, educated or uneducated, and so forth.

All of us have observed how a new student may be accepted by other students. If the student is a girl who comes from a different part of the country, her chances for immediate acceptance are good, especially if she is outgoing and friendly. She may immediately become popular, be elected to office, become a cheerleader, and date the most popular boys in the school. Such acceptance is often conditioned on the new student's dress, mannerisms, speech, and so forth, which may have been average or even trite in the previous school but which are seen as sophisticated in the new setting.

The new student's acceptance may diminish with the passage of time, however. This is much like the teacher who begins a new school year with acceptance by the students who believe that this teacher is "all right" but who is soon rejected. The original acceptance was based on the teacher as the students thought he or she was, not on the basis of how that teacher appeared to them later in a broader context.

In the short term, we tend to accept or reject people on the basis of external characteristics. Over the long haul we judge other people more on the basis of their internal characteristics, and especially on the basis of how we think they perceive us. The key to our deeper understanding is the consistency or inconsistency of their verbal and nonverbal expressions. We will continue to perceive them as we originally did until their verbal and nonverbal behavior shows us that our perceptions are inaccurate. When this happens, we begin to

"Why are we so afraid to try to enter into another person's world of experience?" Are we afraid that we might be changed by it?

modify our perceptions. If they continue to behave as we first saw them, we will continue to see them in the same way.

Our perceptions of other people change most rapidly when something they say or do is seen as inconsistent with our perceptions of them. Such an inconsistency occurs, for example, when a teacher who is seen as warm and accepting arbitrarily rejects one member of a class. Or, it may occur if a teacher whom students believe is considerate of their needs and points of view acts in a manner inconsistent with such perceptions. The teacher might, for example, assign a test for the day after an important athletic contest. Or, in discussing the answers to test questions, the teacher may appear to be unwilling to reconsider what students believe are incorrect answers. The inconsistent things we do are often the means other people use to understand what we are really like. Of course, if we are consistent in our behavioral expressions for a sufficiently long period of time, other people will come to know that we are truly what we appear to be.

COMMUNICATING

We communicate to other people through both our physical and verbal behavior. For example, when smoking was commonplace, you could express friendship or awareness of another person by proffering a cigarette. Suppose, though, you offered a cigarette to a friend who had stopped smoking recently. This act would certainly not be seen as one of friendship. In days gone by, physicians often offered a patient a cigarette before sharing bad news. What do we express when we offer another person a cup of coffee, a piece of gum, or hospitality in one form or another?

If we are talking confidentially with another person and if the other person leans back in his chair, we see him as uninterested or indifferent. If he leans forward, we interpret this as interest in what we are talking about. An administrator who places a desk between himself and a member of the staff is seen as placing distance between the administrator and the other person.

We often tell students how important they are to us by the amount of time we give them to answer a question. If we think a student knows the answer and if we value the student, we will wait a much longer period of time for an answer than if we do not value that student or if we think he or she does not know the answer. How do you feel when the person with whom you are talking keeps looking around a crowded room for someone else with whom to talk? What do we communicate to a person who is sharing a problem with us when we are seen sneaking a look at a clock? What do we communicate when we consistently ignore a student?

The longer children remain in school, the more negative become their attitudes toward school. These changing attitudes are paralleled by increased emphasis on subject matter as an end in itself.

We sometimes try to control these expressive behaviors to deceive other people and to make them believe we are something that we are not. But this is an inefficient use of our resources and, aside from its moral implications, when we do so we are being incongruent. There are better ways of developing consistency and trustworthiness in our behavior than deceit. One way is to develop a relationship with other people so that they are free to be themselves. When they are, they will accord us the same privilege.

Teachers often say that they are too busy to pay attention to

individual students. There is no denying the fact that teachers are busy. They do not have time to do many of the things they would like to do with individual children. If we are too busy to try to communicate warmth, however, our message probably is not as neutral as we hope it is. Instead, the message probably is one of indifference or lack of concern. The things that are important to a child do not necessarily take a lot of time. If we communicate understanding and positive and unconditional regard to one child, we often communicate it to all of the children in the classroom. It does not take a lot of time to react to an obviously happy child by saying, "You really feel good today," or to say to the child who is obviously sad, "Things aren't going so well today?"

The longer students remain in school, the less positive are their self-concepts and their concepts of other people.

Sometimes we are too embarrassed by a student's obvious expression of regard to show that we recognize it. The first year I taught, for example, a tall, bashful, high school girl gave me two intertwined hearts which she had carved from wood. I was embarrassed by her expression of affection, and I turned as red as she was. But somehow I managed to say, "You like me, Julia?" She beamed, and that seemed to be the end of the incident. But was it the end of the incident in Julia's mind? The same sort of thing happened a number of years later when I was working with a very unhappy little boy in therapy. He appeared one day with a bunch of bedraggled wild flowers he had picked and jammed them into my hand. I responded, "You like me and want me to know it?" His answer was a smile and a simple, "Uh-huh."

Let me illustrate the point: what is communicated to one child in a class is often communicated to most of them. When my younger daughter was in the fifth grade, she was frequently upset by the behavior of her teacher. The teacher would give the children a test, and then have them pass their papers to the children in the seat behind them to be graded. Following the grading, the children had to call out the mark given each paper. It hurt my daughter to have to tell the rest of the children day in and day out that the boy in front of her had failed again. She wondered how the boy felt about it. Probably all of the children were somewhat embarrassed for him.

The students we like most are often those who are the easiest to teach. They learn regardless of what we do but they make us feel like we are good teachers.

If a teacher arbitrarily chastizes one child or is unfair to one child, all of the children in the classroom sense the unfairness and react negatively to it. Likewise, when a teacher expresses understanding of one child, the teacher communicates understanding to all of the children. If we pick on one child, we pick on all of the children. And if we express acceptance to one child, we express it to all of them, unless, of course, we constantly express our acceptance to only one or a few children and not to the others. If this occurs, we develop two or more groups in the classroom. The result may be just the opposite from what we desire. If acceptance is expressed only for students the teacher values, then any expression of acceptance for these students may be resented by the remainder of the students.

Although much of our behavior which affects the qualities of our relationships with children is nonverbal or expressive, a significant part is verbal. As with our nonverbal behavior, the qualities of our verbal communications determine to a large degree the qualities of our relationships with our students. Suppose we put the problem in larger perspective by looking at the teaching roles to which teachers aspire, and then look at how these influence our verbal expressions.

IDEAL TEACHING ROLES

I have often used a Q-sort technique to help teachers describe how they would teach if they could be their ideal. The Q-sort is simply a way of sorting a number of descriptive statements along a continuum. The extreme ends of the continuum are labeled "most like your ideal" and "least like your ideal." The descriptions of many teachers who have engaged in Q-sort analysis have been examined by a statistical procedure called factor analysis. Factors are simply statistical generalizations about the practices and concepts that "hang together," but they make it possible to "make sense" of the many responses of hundreds of teachers. Five factors have been found which can be used to describe the roles teachers idealize.

The roles of some teachers in relationship to their students are described in two ways: facilitating and controlling.

Facilitating Role

1	opening the students to new experience
2	planning with the students
3	helping students learn how to monitor their own behavior and learning
4	helping students become responsible for themselves and their learning
5	being responsive to the guidance and suggestions of the students

Controlling Role

1	focusing students' learning on what the teachers think the students should know
2	planning for students' learning
3	monitoring students' learning and behavior
4	being responsible for seeing that students act responsibly
5	guiding students to become what the teachers think they should become

The first of these teachers can be characterized as idealizing freeing and facilitating roles while the second group engages in molding and controlling roles. Many teachers, of course, try to practice both of these roles at the same time. Some teachers think they are practicing one type but are actually practicing the other.

Pursuit of either of these two types of roles affects the verbal behavior of teachers. Apparently the difference in the two types is a basic one, since freeing and facilitating teachers are rated by their principals as more successful than molding ones, other things being equal. Elementary teachers more often describe freeing and facilitating ideal role concepts, while secondary teachers more often describe molding and controlling ideals. The same difference characterizes the idealized roles of teachers in self-contained elementary classrooms in comparison with elementary teachers in departmentalized schools. There are also systematic differences according to the sex and race of the teachers. For example, white, female teachers are more freeing and facilitating than are white males, and black teachers tend to be more molding and controlling than white teachers.

ROLES AND BEHAVIOR

The role a teacher idealizes has important effects on how the teacher talks to students. For example, freeing and facilitating teachers ask questions which are designed to help students think through problems, to consider alternatives, and to initiate action. A freeing and facilitating teacher also asks questions to discover what is important to the students and how they feel about particular issues. On the other hand, the questions of molding or controlling teachers more frequently are designed to find out if the students know what they should know, to see if they have been paying attention, and to see if they are following instructions. The qualities of the relationships established by these two different types of teachers are obvious: freeing and facilitating teachers communicate positive regard more easily than molding and controlling teachers. Such teachers also have greater opportunity to show unconditionality of regard, empathic understanding, and congruence.

It is not the teacher's verbal behavior *per se* that influences students' perceptions of the qualities of the roles the teachers are playing, however. Instead, students react more to the intention of the teacher. If they believe the intention of the teacher is to mold and control them, then they react one way, but if they believe the teacher's intention is to free and facilitate, then they react in other ways. The students react to the personal qualities of the teacher's behavior; what it implies about positive and unconditional regard, its level of empathic understanding, and its congruence.

The image most adults hold of God resembles the one they held when they were six years old. Our beliefs change slowly and we give up old beliefs reluctantly.

Some teachers can be rigid and unbending and still have excellent relationships with their students, while other teachers who are equally rigid and unbending are rejected by their students. The difference is in what the students see as the teachers' intentions. If teachers are really concerned with helping students learn, and if the students know that what is being taught is important, then those teachers are seen by the students as helpful. Such teachers are rated high by the students.

Thus, a teacher can adopt either a freeing and facilitating or a

molding and controlling role and still be a successful teacher. Why, then, are freeing and facilitating teachers more often seen as successful teachers by their principals? The answer to the question lies partially in how we are accustomed to perceiving people. If people such as our parents, whom we believe have been helpful to us have controlled our behavior, then we may perceive a molding and controlling teacher, who is teaching something we believe is important, in a positive manner, and we might even see a freeing and facilitating teacher as soft and uninterested. On the other hand, it is usually easier for the freeing and facilitating teacher to be seen as interested and as wanting to be helpful, but this in part is a product of the students' expectations.

Insights—real, genuine glimpses of ourselves as we really are—are reached only with difficulty and sometimes with real psychic pain. But they are the building blocks of growth.

Let me illustrate what I have been saying by referring to a teacher in the high school in which I last taught. Miss Peck was an elderly teacher, not far from retirement. She taught American history and had a no-nonsense approach to her teaching. She gave fair but difficult assignments and expected a high level of achievement from her students. Students who were poorly prepared entered her classroom fearful and trembling. As a result, the students usually did their homework for her class, even if they did not do it for the rest of us. My first impression was that Miss Peck could not be very well-liked by the students.

As I got to know Miss Peck better during the year, however, I found her to be a warm person interested in other people. I noticed, too, that when former students visited the school, they often went first to Miss Peck's classroom. Later I asked some of them why they did this. Their answers told me that Miss Peck was highly respected: she forced them to learn a subject for which they knew they must be prepared. Almost all of the students attended college after high school graduation, and almost all of them were required to take American history in their freshman year. They understood that Miss Peck's demands were for their own good, and they did not resent those demands.

Most of us are not so fortunate. For example, I used to teach high school chemistry and physics. Although some of my students knew they would study more chemistry and physics in college, most of them never expected to take another course in those areas. These latter students saw chemistry and physics in quite a different light than did the others. In this respect they were like the average student in the typical classroom after the middle school years.

"Be so true to thyself, as thou be not false to others." [Bacon, *Of Wisdom for a Man's Self*]

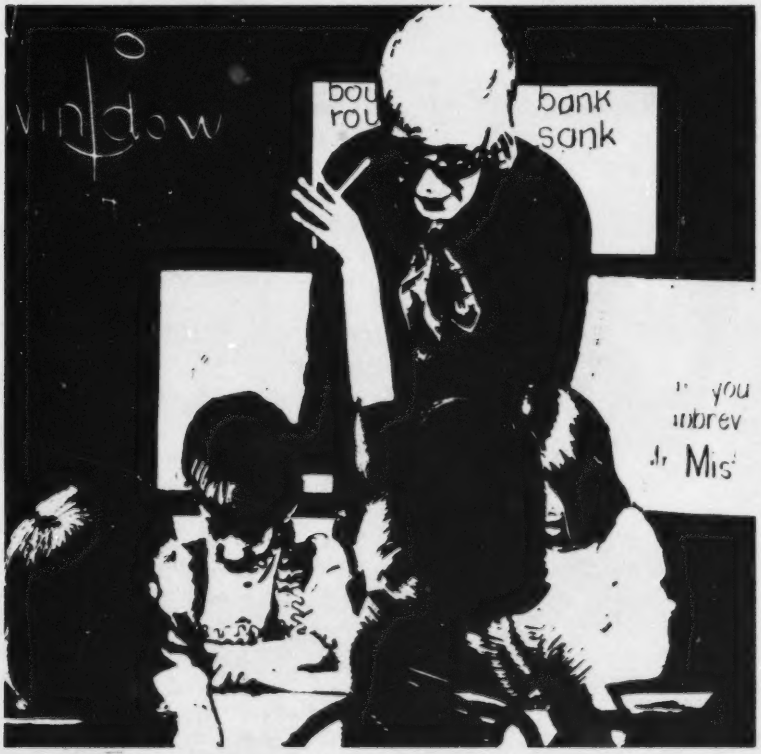
Through grade six it is not difficult to convince students that what is being taught is essential for the world in which we live. Beyond grade six, though, many subjects present a different problem. It is not easy to convince children that learning algebra is important. It is even more difficult if they come from poor homes. Can you convince a child who has experienced no need for it that Spanish or French is important to learn? For that matter, can you convince a child from a poor, and, perhaps, illiterate home that learning to speak standard English is important? Important for what? The people who know and love this child do not speak standard English. Why should the child learn it?

A major point of this discussion is that if we are teaching something which must be learned and something which the students know they must learn, we can be effective using a molding

and controlling role concept. But we must expect the learning to be limited in terms of types of cognitive objectives. The students will master cognitive objectives such as simple and immediate recall of facts, but they may never reach the higher level objectives. More importantly, self-concept will suffer. The students will become less responsible for themselves and they will become less confident of their ability to learn meaningful things without being taught. A large portion of the people who are attracted to adult education classes are there because they do not believe they can teach themselves. They have become dependent on being taught by someone else.

The longer children remain in school, the less opportunity they have to make decisions for themselves in their own classrooms. Although this is a result of curricular emphases, it seems to students that their teachers lack regard for their ability to make decisions for themselves.

A second major point also relates to self-concept development. If a teacher's idealized role concept is consistent with the objectives which are being sought, it is easier for students to discern the helpful qualities of the relationship. For example, if we are teaching trade or skill courses to students who believe the courses are important, and if all we want the students to learn is information and skills, then it is easy for the students to recognize the helpful nature of a molding and controlling role concept. However, if we are teaching courses such as those taught in most public secondary schools which attempt to broaden people's perspectives, to give them insight into the nature of relationships among groups of people, to help them understand the structure of knowledge in a particular discipline, and to help them understand how people solve problems in a variety of academic fields, then molding and controlling roles are not only inappropriate, they are counterproductive. Most especially, they are counterproductive for self-concept development.



It seems clear that, at most school levels, we can promote significant learning and at the same time we can promote self-concept development if we adopt teaching roles which are freeing and facilitating. However, we often do not adopt such roles because we believe that, left to their own devices and motives, students will not learn what is important for them to learn. In the elementary grades, we believe we can be more freeing and facilitating because the children can be trusted to learn what is being taught. We do not feel the need to threaten children in the lower grades with report cards to the degree we do in the upper grades to force them to learn what is being taught. Most teachers in the lower grades recognize that children really do want to learn what is being taught, even if they are having difficulty learning it.

We get into trouble when what we are trying to teach is seen as unimportant by the learners. When this happens, we believe that we must force them to learn. Our relationships with the students deteriorate, and their self-concepts undergo rapid and negative change. But is what we are teaching so important? When I taught chemistry so that students could see its importance in the world around them, they learned it easily. When I attempted to make chemists of the students, it had little meaning for them.

DEFINING OUR RELATIONSHIPS

The previous discussion makes two important points. First, the type of ideal role concept we hold influences how we talk to students. Second, the ways in which we talk to students affect the qualities of the relationships we seek to establish with them. Suppose we look at particular types of communicating and how these make a difference in our relationships.

ASKING QUESTIONS

We can ask questions of students for a variety of purposes. One purpose is to determine how much they know or if they did their homework. Sometimes we ask questions only to keep them "on their toes." More appropriately, we ask questions to diagnose learning problems and to discover what needs further clarification.

Obviously, such purposes are more appropriate for molding and controlling roles than for freeing and facilitating ones. What is less obvious is the fact that such questions pose threats for students. If they respond with the answers we want to hear, we reward them with approval and with good marks. But woe unto the students if they are not prepared.

We teachers sometimes respond as if we are under personal attack. We act as if the students are saying that what is being taught is not important enough to learn or that we are not effective teachers. And when teachers are threatened, they threaten the students. Of course the teacher's threat, from the teacher's point of view, is designed to make the children wary of not preparing themselves the next time. But students see it differently. They become defensive. They no longer study to learn. Instead, they study to protect themselves. They do not learn what they think is important. They learn what the teacher thinks is important, and they tend to

learn only enough to escape punishment. They try to learn the teacher's rules and demands, and they circumvent these whenever possible. Worse still, they defend themselves. Their perceptions become more restricted, and they think less of themselves as people. Their self-concept development is in a downward spiral, and they become less open to experience and its personal meanings.

The learnings which significantly influence our behavior are those we discover within our own experience.

It is probably a good rule for a teacher who is practicing a freeing and facilitating role never to ask a question if the teacher already knows the answer. On the face of it, this is a ridiculous statement. How can the teacher know if children know what they should without asking questions? But is this the most productive role for this teacher? At best it limits attainment of cognitive objectives to simple recall, rote memory, and recognition. It never reaches the highest teaching objectives of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation or critical thinking. In other words, it assures that the students have the content of a basic education, but it never assures thinking, reasoning people. Because of threat, such a questioning technique may work against the achievement of these higher objectives.

If we ask questions when we know the answers, our usual reason for asking them is to see if the students know the answers. If this is our purpose, we usually act on the students' responses. We reward them by saying, "Good," or "That's correct," if they give the right answers or we punish them by our response if the answers are incorrect. Since students seek to avoid punishment, our questions become threats. When we create a threatening relationship, the consequences for self-concept development are negative, since the students seek to defend and protect themselves and become less open to experience.

Even if we cannot ask questions for which we already know the answers, we can still ask questions. Questions are a good means for teachers to find out what students are thinking and feeling, to find out what is important to them, to start discussions, to help them plan lines of action, or for similar purposes. When teachers ask these kinds of questions, they are implementing freeing and facilitating roles. They are communicating interest in the students and those students' thoughts. They are showing the students that their points of view are important. Such questions stimulate intellectual activity in students and at the same time assist in creating a helping relationship wherein the students can become more experienced and more open to experience. The consequences for self-concept development are positive.

EVALUATIVE STATEMENTS

Closely allied to asking questions, the use of approval or disapproval by teachers or any statements involving evaluation of the students or of their responses is fairly common. The teacher might ask a student, "What is the capital of Alabama?" and the student may answer, "Montgomery." Few teachers can resist saying, "Right," or "Good."

What is wrong with that? The problem lies in the fact that the locus of responsibility for evaluation and for learning is now centered in the teacher. The students are freed from responsibility for self-evaluation. They discover that their responsibility is only to please the teacher by giving the correct answer to the question. It may be

easier to see the point if the student had answered, "Birmingham" to the teacher's question. In that case, the teacher would have said, "Wrong," or "Incorrect," or would have indicated nonacceptance of the student's response. To be incorrect in school means to fail. Failure is threatening and has negative self-concept effects.

Even the use of approval by a teacher who would never think of using disapproval as a response may pose a threat to a child. Praise and positive evaluation carry with them the notion that "I reserve the right to evaluate your responses. Right now I approve, but I may disapprove of some other response you may make." Or, it may carry the implication that "I will approve what I think is right and what I think you should be doing, but I will disapprove otherwise." The only role left for the students is to discover what the teacher will approve and to try to respond in ways which the students hope will achieve approval or to appear to be doing those things which will bring approval. In either case, the students are no longer seeking personal meaning in experience. They are seeking to protect and to defend themselves.

The self-concept is like this filter; it screens out what we do not want to hear and see, and it passes through what we do want to hear and see.

It is not easy to avoid the use of evaluation in the culture in which we live. It is also not easy since we have grown so accustomed to believing that it is the duty of a teacher to evaluate; that teachers cannot be helpful unless they evaluate. There is only one answer to this. We must help students learn to evaluate their own responses and to become responsible for them. We cannot do it for them without the negative effects which have been described. Neither will they do it for themselves when they are busy defending themselves. Self-evaluation is possible only when we are trying to find meaning in experience; that is, when we are open to experience and its meanings for us, not when we are defending ourselves.

ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Another aspect of our interactions with students has already been introduced. This is the question of the locus of responsibility for students' behavior.

To the molding and controlling teacher, questions about responsibility are easy to answer. The teacher sees himself or herself as responsible for the student's behavior. For example, if a teacher leaves the classroom and comes back to find it in turmoil, the most frequent response of the teacher is something like this: "I see you can't be responsible for yourselves. Until you can prove you can be responsible, I won't leave you alone." The teacher has now set the stage for further problems, since how will the students learn to be responsible and how can they demonstrate responsibility without opportunity?

Teachers need not feel so responsible for the students. They can, instead, place the responsibility where it belongs: with the learners. Consider an illustration. Students are going to recess or to the lunchroom and a minor disturbance occurs. If the disturbance is not serious, the teacher may ignore it until the class returns to the room. At this point the teacher can ask, "Did anyone notice any problems as we went to lunch?" Usually, the children have noticed a lot of problems, some of which were not even noticed by the teacher. They are willing to share their perceptions of the problems. At this point the teacher may find himself or herself in the role of directing the conversation so that personalities are left out of the discussion. What the teacher wants is for the students to recognize that a problem exists and for the students to begin to solve the problem for themselves. The teacher might ask: "What do you think we might have done?" or "What do you think we should do if the problem occurs again?" thereby placing the responsibility for recognizing and solving the problem on the students. Interestingly enough, the younger the children, the better they are at accepting responsibility for controlling themselves. The older they get, the more difficult it sometimes is to get them to accept such responsibility. Have we actually taught them to be irresponsible?

As a school year progresses, children feel less positively about their worth as people. During the summer they tend to reverse these feelings and to regain more positive self-concepts. But like a steel wire, the more often they are bent, the less likely they are to return to their original status.

The same problem of responsibility comes up in other ways. As teachers, we often assume that we must serve as critics for students' work, since we are the "experts." When we do this of course, we not only rob students of opportunities to be responsible for themselves, we usually end up creating a threatening situation. Few people can accept negative criticism without reacting defensively, especially when what is being criticized is important to them. Defensiveness is what we are seeking to avoid so we can assist students to become more experienced persons with more adequate self-concepts.

One thing a teacher can do to avoid threat is to help students serve as their own critics. Thus, the teacher may ask, "Would you like to tell me about your paper?" or "Would you like to tell the class about it?" In the lower grades children may be encouraged to share their drawings with the class and the teacher can accept responsibility for asking the class, "What do you like most (never say "least") about the picture?" The same thing can be done with any creative production at any age level. Criticism from a teacher usually leads to defensiveness, and defensiveness diminishes creativeness. Criticism often implies that there is one correct way to solve a problem and that other solutions are incorrect.

One of the most productive responses for teachers to make to help students accept responsibility for criticizing their own work is silence. If a teacher pauses, the students often begin to criticize their own work. The teacher can then assist the students in their own self-criticism by directing their attention to positive features of the creations and by helping them to answer the question, "What would you do differently next time?"

THE USE OF REASSURANCE

It seems almost a natural impulse to offer reassurance to a person who feels depressed or anxious about the outcome of some event. We tell the person, "Don't worry. Things will work out OK." Or we say, "Things will look better tomorrow." But reassurance seldom has the desired effect. If a child thinks the end of the world has arrived, for us to say that things will look better tomorrow probably only implies that we do not understand how terrible things really are. As a consequence, the helpful nature of our relationship suffers.

There are alternatives to reassurance which do communicate understanding. The simplest one has been called reflection of feeling. Reflection of feeling consists of recognizing the other person's feelings or intentions and stating them back in such a way that the person can see that we understand. For example, think about the child we discussed earlier who enters our classroom with a big smile on his face. Obviously, the youngster is happy. It does not take much time or effort for the teacher to show the child that he understands by saying, "You're feeling pretty good today?" If such a statement is always made in a tentative manner and as a question, the other person can reject it or modify it if it does not "fit."

In our culture, behavior such as reflection of feeling is not common. Just think of all of the "gross" things we can say to a student who has failed. Usually, we try to reassure the student that he will do better the next time, but in so doing, we often say or imply things such as: "It's nothing, you'll get over it," or, "You're not worthy of my time." Perhaps we do not make our comments this bluntly, but no matter how we try to phrase them, they often come across this way.

Many catastrophies occur in the lives of students, both at home and at school. Can we reassure a child whose parent has died, that everything will be OK? Probably not, but we can recognize the feeling of loss or anxiety which the child is experiencing and communicate that we understand. Such communications with children should always occur in private. When we have such communications, we can expect the child to be more expressive of the grief which is felt. Our immediate reaction to the child's expression may be that we have been upsetting; we may feel embarrassed. But when are we most outspoken with our grief? When we are understood.

There are many situations which students experience which produce feelings almost as intense as the death of a parent. We can be most helpful to the students by recognizing what they are experiencing and by attempting to communicate our understanding to them. With a child who fears failure we can say, "You're afraid of failing?" The child will probably say, "Yes," in which case we can begin to explore what might be done to avoid it in the future.

A frightened or anxious child has a more rigid perceptual field than a secure child.

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, Or what's a heaven for?" [Robert Browning, *Andrea del Sarto*]

Life for children and teenagers is full of tragedies: losing a sweetheart, being snubbed by a group of peers, being laughed at for making mistakes, being attacked by other children, being ridiculed for not wearing "approved" clothes, and a host of other things. Simple recognition of the fact that a child is disturbed, a warm smile, a friendly greeting, or any other indication that the child is an important human being can do much to salve the pain of misfortune and is far more effective than reassurance.

One reason we avoid such things is that our culture requires that people deny their feelings. When we encourage the expression of people's feelings, we feel embarrassed for them. Embarrassment is always the result of unwittingly communicating our feelings. In the past it has been more taboo for a boy or a man to express feelings in our culture than for a girl or a woman to make such an expression, and there is still much of this feeling left today. There is no reason for us to be ashamed about our feelings, to deny them to other people, or worse still, to ourselves. When we deny our feelings, we are more remote from our experiencing and thus less open to it. Our self-concepts are less than adequate.

INFORMATION GIVING

A major activity of the molding and controlling teacher is information giving. In fact, the teacher may spend most of the class time doing this. And why not? We have adopted a concept of teaching as telling people what they need to know and seeing to it that they learn it. A common conception of good teaching is a knowledgeable teacher telling uninformed students what they need to know. In addition, if the teacher is really capable, it is commonly believed that the students will learn what they are told and will like it regardless of whether or not they are internally motivated to learn it. We do not insist that they like what is taught, but we do insist that good teachers should tell and that, as a result, students will learn.

With such a paradigm, the best we can hope for is learning which satisfies the simplest of the cognitive objectives. Children learn to depend on their teachers for direction and information. The relationship is one which encourages dependency. It is one in which subject matter is more important than people. It is a relationship in which subject matter is of primary importance and people's feelings and perceptions are secondary. It is not a relationship which is designed to open people to the personal meanings of new experience; it is designed to open them only to the experiences which are meaningful to their teachers and to close them to alternatives. Such instruction borders on indoctrination. It promotes reliance on teachers and results in loss of opportunity for students to learn independence.

Students often ask for information when they have independent sources from which they can get the answers. Teachers should never cover up the fact that they do not know an answer. Most students can see through a teacher's defense. Teachers should admit it if they do not know. If they are interested in the answer, they should ask the student to tell them what the answer is when he or she discovers it. A teacher might say, "I wonder where you could find the answer to your question?" and then be ready to suggest sources of information.

Teachers should give information whenever they are the only source of that information. This is seldom the case, however, and when it is, it involves a danger: students begin to rely on the teacher to tell them what they need to know, and the nature of the relationship is changed. Sometimes when students ask for information for which the teacher is the only source, they resent the teacher giving it to them. In my teaching with college-level students, I try to establish a freeing and facilitating relationship. Within this relationship, students sometimes find a problem to discuss which is in my major area of research interest and for which I am the only source of information. At such times they sometimes ask me to lecture to them and to share my information. At first, when I did this at their request, I was puzzled by their reactions, which were not always positive. They seemed to resent my telling them, even though they had asked me to do it. I have come to understand that what they resent is the different role in which they are cast by my sharing the information. Our relationship had become more of a molding and controlling one.

FREEING OR MOLDING?

Few teachers can be thought of purely as molding and controlling or as freeing and facilitating. Furthermore, some teachers who seek freeing and facilitating teaching roles actually practice molding and controlling ones. For example, a teacher may seek to help students become expert problem solvers by requiring them to learn what the teacher believes is essential information. Such a teacher may also attempt to teach students what the teacher has found to be meaningful so that students will have access to "meaningful" information and can become responsible for themselves. From the point of view of this teacher, information is a necessary means to a larger end.

It is also true that some teachers who appear to be seeking freeing and facilitating roles engage in interactions with their students which have little substance. As has already been said, molding and controlling teachers are not always insensitive to students' needs and feelings; neither are teachers who try to be freeing and facilitating always sensitive.

Students report strong positive feelings toward most of their teachers but more than one-half of them hold strong negative feelings toward at least one teacher.

Regardless of the kind of teaching role to which we aspire, the verbal interactions we use with students will be consistent with them. If we believe that our role should be to teach students what we believe they need to know, we will attempt to focus the students' attention on what it is that we think they need to learn. We will lecture to give them the information we think they will need as educated people. We will ask questions to assess their progress, to see if they have learned what they are supposed to have learned, and to otherwise monitor their learning. We will give advice and suggestions and we will reward them for their correct responses. In other words, we will attempt to guide them to the goals which we have selected for them and we will use whatever devices we have available for helping them reach these goals. Such devices include information giving, rewarding appropriate behavior, encouragement, persuasion, evaluation, reassurance, diagnostic questions, and other procedures. Our interest in self-concept development probably will be limited.

If, though, we see our role as opening students to new experience, helping them to discover personal meanings in their experience, helping them to become responsible for the solution of problems which they have determined are meaningful to them, and helping them to accept responsibility for their own behavior, we will be more concerned about the qualities of the human relationships we are developing with them. We will more often center our concerns in the students, in what they are experiencing, and in what its meanings are for them. Because of this we will talk to them in efforts to help them design their learning experiences, to help them discover how they can best use us to assist them in their learning, to help them understand the meanings of their experiences, to help them accept responsibility for diagnosing their problems, and to help them accept responsibility for solving their problems. Our verbal interactions will be concentrated mainly on helping students decide what they want to do, how they want to do it, how well they are doing it, and how they are reacting to it.

If we are important to another person and if we evaluate the person, we usually cause defensive behavior and may even close the person to experiential meanings.

A major feature of a freeing and facilitating teaching role is concern for the self of the student. Such a role recognizes the right of people to be themselves and to have their individual likes and dislikes, attitudes, and values. Such a role is more easily implemented by teachers who have a deep respect for students' ability to solve their own problems if given a chance to do so and a recognition that it is the responsibility of the students to make choices and to initiate change in themselves than by teachers who believe that subject matter is preeminent.

A freeing and facilitating teacher recognizes that there are many points of view and that each may have merit. This type of teacher not only respects the right of students to hold their individual points of view, but recognizes that it is essential that students accept responsibility for them. All too often in our culture we seem to believe that when differences in points of view exist, one is correct and the other is incorrect. This, of course, is not always true. Some people prefer one thing while others prefer something else. Some people value one thing and believe in one set of truths while others value other things and subscribe to different sets of truths. The freeing and facilitating teacher is interested in the students' points of view and in understanding them. Such a teacher also recognizes the right of the students to believe as they do and attempts to help them accept ownership of their points of view and responsibility for examining them in depth. A facilitating teacher is not interested in creating a point of view, but in helping students formulate their own points of view and helping them examine themselves in relationship to these. Such examinations lead toward greater openness to experience and toward self-concepts which more closely approximate the personal meanings of experience.

A growing person has, by definition, unrealized power. If his self-concept, his expectation of himself, his self-direction, and his constantly broadening perceptions allow him to find it.

In the molding and controlling mode, there is little reason for a teacher to be concerned about the self-concepts of the students. In the freeing and facilitating mode, self-concept is a central factor.

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